

CLAIMS

I/We claim:

- [c1] 1. A contact assembly for use in an electrochemical deposition system to apply an electrical potential to a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:
a support member having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece; and
a plurality of contacts including a conductor and a cover, the conductor comprising a proximal section projecting inwardly into the opening relative to the support member, a distal section extending from the proximal section, and an inert exterior at least at the distal section, and the cover comprising a dielectric material covering at least the proximal section of the conductor.
- [c2] 2. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the support member comprises a conductive ring defining a conductive element, a dielectric exterior, and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting outside of the cover.
- [c3] 3. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the support member comprises a dielectric ring having a conductive bus and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and

the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting outside of the cover, and wherein the rods are electrically coupled to the conductive bus in the ring.

[c4]

4. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets at an angle swept relative to a radius of the ring; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting outside of the cover.

[c5]

5. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project inwardly and upwardly from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting outside of the cover.

[c6]

6. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the support member; and

the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover.

- [c7] 7. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths;
the conductors comprise rods received in the sheaths; and
a plurality of boots cover corresponding turrets.
- [c8] 8. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors each have an aperture through which a gas can flow.
- [c9] 9. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the contacts are coupled to the support member by a positionable connector that allows the contacts to swivel with respect to the support member.
- [c10] 10. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths having a bore.
- [c11] 11. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors comprise rods composed of platinum or a platinum/iridium alloy.
- [c12] 12. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.
- [c13] 13. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors comprise stainless steel rods.
- [c14] 14. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors comprise tungsten rods.

- [c15] 15. The contact assembly of claim 1 wherein the conductors comprise tungsten rods having a platinum coating.
- [c16] 16. A contact assembly for use in an electrochemical deposition system to apply an electrical potential to a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:
a support member having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece, a dielectric exterior, and an electrically conductive element within the dielectric exterior; and
a contact system having a plurality of contacts projecting inwardly into the opening relative to the support member, the contacts including a conductor having a contact site with an inert surface and a dielectric cover over at least a portion of the conductor, and the conductor being electrically coupled to the conductive element of the support member.
- [c17] 17. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the support member; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting inwardly from the cover.
- [c18] 18. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths having a bore.
- [c19] 19. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.
- [c20] 20. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

21. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets at an angle swept relative to a radius of the ring; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting outside of the cover.

22. The contact assembly of claim 16 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the
sheaths have a bore and project inwardly and upwardly from the
turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section
received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting outside of
the cover.

23. A contact assembly for use in an electrochemical deposition system to apply an electrical potential to a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

- a ring having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece; and
- a plurality of contacts projecting inwardly from the ring into the opening, the contacts comprising a dielectric element and a conductor having a first section in the dielectric element and a second section exposed relative to the dielectric element, and wherein at least the second section of the conductor has an inert exterior.

[c24] 24. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein:
the ring has a conductive element, a dielectric exterior, and a plurality of
turrets;
the dielectric elements comprise sheaths that have a bore and project from
the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section
received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting inwardly
from the cover.

[c25] 25. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein:
the ring has a dielectric body, a conductive bus carried by the body, and a
plurality of turrets;
the dielectric elements comprise sheaths that have a bore and project from
the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section
received in the bore of a sheath and a distal end projecting inwardly
from the sheath, and wherein the rods are electrically coupled to the
conductive bus in the ring.

[c26] 26. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein:
the ring has a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the dielectric elements comprise sheaths that have a bore and project from
the turrets at an angle swept relative to a radius of the ring; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods partially received in the
sheaths.

[c27] 27. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein:
the ring has a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the dielectric elements comprise sheaths that have a bore and project
inwardly and upwardly from the turrets; and

the conductors of the contacts comprise rods partially received in the sheaths.

[c28] 28. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein:
the dielectric elements comprise sheaths that have a bore and project from the support member; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the sheaths and a distal end projecting from the sheaths.

[c29] 29. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein the dielectric elements comprise sheaths having a bore.

[c30] 30. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.

[c31] 31. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

[c32] 32. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein the conductors comprise stainless steel rods.

[c33] 33. The contact assembly of claim 23 wherein the conductors comprise tungsten rods.

[c34] 34. A contact assembly for use in an electrochemical deposition system to apply an electrical potential to a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:
a support member having a ring including an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece and a plurality of turrets depending downwardly;

[c39] 39. A reactor for electrochemical deposition processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

a vessel configured to hold a processing solution;

an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel;

a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position; and

a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises -

a support member having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece; and

a plurality of contacts including a conductor and a cover, the conductor comprising a proximal section projecting inwardly into the opening relative to the support member, a distal section extending from the proximal section, and an inert exterior at least at the distal section, and the cover comprising a dielectric element covering at least the proximal section of the conductor.

[c40]

40. The reactor of claim 39 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c41]

41. The reactor of claim 39 wherein:
the support member comprises a dielectric ring having a conductive bus and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover, and wherein the rods are electrically coupled to the conductive bus in the ring.

[c42]

42. The reactor of claim 39 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;

[c43] 43. The reactor of claim 39 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project inwardly and upwardly from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c44] 44. The reactor of claim 39 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the
sheaths have a bore and project from the support member; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received
in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from
the cover.

[c45] 45. A reactor for electrochemical deposition processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

- a vessel configured to hold a processing solution;
- an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel;

a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position; and

a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises -

- a support member having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece and an electrically conductive element; and
- a contact system having a plurality of contacts projecting inwardly into the opening relative to the support member, the contacts including a conductor having a contact site with an inert surface and a dielectric cover over at least a portion of the conductor, and the conductor being electrically coupled to the conductive element of the support member.

[c46] 46. The reactor of claim 45 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the support member; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c47] 47. The reactor of claim 45 wherein the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths having a bore.

[c48] 48. The reactor of claim 45 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.

[c49] 49. The reactor of claim 45 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

[c50] 50. The reactor of claim 45 wherein:
the support member further comprises a ring having the conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets at an angle swept relative to a radius of the ring; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c51] 51. The reactor of claim 45 wherein:
the support member further comprises a ring having the conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project inwardly and upwardly from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a proximal section received in the bore of a cover and a distal end projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c52] 52. A reactor for electrochemical deposition processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:
a vessel configured to hold a processing solution;
an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel;
a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position; and
a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises -

a ring having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece; and

a plurality of contacts projecting inwardly from the ring into the opening, the contacts comprising a dielectric element and a conductor having a first section in the dielectric element and a second section exposed relative to the dielectric element, and wherein at least the second section of the conductor has an inert exterior.

[c53] 53. A reactor for electrochemical deposition processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

a vessel configured to hold a processing solution;

an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel;

a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position; and

a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises -

a support member having a ring including an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece and a plurality of turrets depending downwardly;

a plurality of dielectric sheaths coupled to the support member, wherein each sheath has a bore and projects from a corresponding turret inwardly into the opening; and

a plurality of conductors having a first section, a second section, and an inert exterior on at least the second section, wherein at least the first section of each conductor is received in the bore of a sheath.

[c54] 54. The reactor of claim 53 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.

[c55] 55. The reactor of claim 53 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

[c56] 56. The reactor of claim 53 wherein the conductors comprise stainless steel rods.

[c57] 57. The reactor of claim 53 wherein the conductors comprise tungsten rods.

[c58] 58. A tool for electrochemical processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

a cabinet;

a transfer mechanism; and

an electroplating reactor in the cabinet comprising a vessel configured to hold a processing solution, an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel, a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position, and a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises - a support member having an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece; and

a plurality of contacts including a conductor and a cover, the conductor comprising a proximal section projecting inwardly into the opening relative to the support member, a distal section extending from the proximal section, and an inert exterior at least at the distal section, and the cover

comprising a dielectric material covering at least the proximal section of the conductor.

[c59] 59. The tool of claim 58 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element, a dielectric exterior, and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting away from the cover.

[c60] 60. The tool of claim 58 wherein:
the support member comprises a dielectric ring having a conductive bus and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover, and wherein the rods are electrically coupled to the conductive bus in the ring.

[c61] 61. The tool of claim 58 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the turrets at an angle swept relative to a radius of the ring; and

the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting away from the cover.

[c62]

62. The tool of claim 58 wherein:
the support member comprises a ring having a conductive element and a plurality of turrets;
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project inwardly and upwardly from the turrets; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c63]

63. The tool of claim 58 wherein:
the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths, and wherein the sheaths have a bore and project from the support member; and
the conductors of the contacts comprise rods having a first section received in the bore of a cover and a second section projecting inwardly from the cover.

[c64]

64. The tool of claim 58 wherein the covers of the contacts comprise dielectric sheaths having a bore.

[c65]

65. The tool of claim 58 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.

[c66]

66. The tool of claim 58 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

[c67] 67. The tool of claim 58 wherein the conductors comprise stainless steel rods.

[c68] 68. The tool of claim 58 wherein the conductors comprise tungsten rods.

[c69] 69. A tool for electrochemical processing of a microelectronic workpiece, comprising:

a cabinet;

a transfer mechanism; and

an electroplating reactor in the cabinet comprising a vessel configured to

hold a processing solution, an electrode disposed relative to the vessel to provide an electrical potential in the vessel, a head assembly moveable relative to the vessel between a load/unload position and a processing position, and a contact assembly carried by the head assembly, wherein the contact assembly comprises -

a support member having a ring including an inner wall defining an opening configured to receive the workpiece and a plurality of turrets depending downwardly;

a plurality of dielectric sheaths coupled to the support member, wherein each sheath has a bore and projects from a corresponding turret inwardly into the opening; and

a plurality of conductors having a first section, a second section, and an inert exterior on at least the second section, wherein at least the first section of each conductor is received in the bore of a sheath.

[c70] 70. The tool of claim 69 wherein the conductors comprise platinum rods.

[c71] 71. The tool of claim 69 wherein the conductors comprise titanium rods having a platinum coating.

[c72] 72. The tool of claim 69 herein the conductors comprise stainless steel rods.

[c73] 73. The tool of claim 69 herein the conductors comprise tungsten rods.

[c74] 74. A method of manufacturing a contact assembly for electrochemical processing of microelectronic workpieces, comprising:

covering a portion of a conductor with a dielectric cover to leave an exposed contact site on the conductor; and

attaching the cover and/or the conductor to a support ring so that the conductor projects into an opening of the support ring.